

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6332

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 1707

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, BG, IN

SUBJECT: INDO-BANGLADESH MARITIME BOUNDARY

REF: NEW DELHI 4518

1. TALKING WITH EMBOFF ON APRIL 4, KAISER MORSHED, MFA'S DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR SUBCONTINENT, LEFT EMBOFF WITH IMPRESSION THAT MARCH 29-APRIL 2 NEW DELHI VISIT OF FOREIGN MINISTER KAMAL HOSSAIN HAD MOVED MARITIME BOUNDARY ISSUE TOWARD RESOLUTION. AFTER EMPHASIZING (BUT NOT ANALYZING) IMPORTANCE OF KAMAL HOSSAIN'S TWO MEETINGS WITH P.N. HAKSAR, MORSHED SAID EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS LIES IN THAT SENTENCE OF JOINT STATEMENT WHICH SAYS: "NEGOTIATIONS ON THE DELIMITATION OF THE MARITIME BOUNDARY HAVE ADVANCED TO A STAGE WHERE BOTH SIDES FELT (SIC) CONFIDENT OF FINDING AN EXPEDITIOUS AND MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION."

2. MORSHED WENT ON TO SAY BOTH SIDES HAVE GOTTEN DOWN TO HARD BARGAINING. HE ADDED THAT MORE DISCUSSION WILL INEVITABLY BE REQUIRED. HE OPINED THAT THEY WILL PROBABLY BE AT FOREIGN MINISTER AND FOREIGN SECRETARY LEVEL (OR A MIX THEREOF); HE SUGGESTED THAT THERE WAS
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NO PRESENT NECESSITY FOR A MUJIB-GANDHI MEETING. IN

CLOSING, MORSHED STRESSED THAT RESOLUTION OF MARITIME BOUNDARY PROBLEM NOW HAS A "VERY FINITE TIME FRAME"; HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, OFFER ANY INDICATION OF THE TIME FRAME'S SPECIFIC FINITENESS.

3. COMENT: MORSHED'S REMARKS AND THOSE OF MANI DIXIT REPORTED IN REFTEL CONTINUE TO DISPLAY THE DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROBLEM AND ITS MOVEMENT TOWARD RESOLUTION WHICH HAVE BEEN EVIDENT HERE OVER THE PAST MONTHS. MORSHED HAS ALWAYS SOUGHT, UNSURPRISINGLY, TO PLACE HIS MASTERS IN THE BEST POSSIBLE LIGHT, AND HIS APRIL 4 REMARKS MAY BE MORE OF THE SAME. NEVERTHELESS, GIVEN MORSHED'S NORMAL RESERVE AND HIS RELUCTANCE TO ENGAGE IN SPECULATION, HIS COMMENTS AND ATTITUDE SEEMED MUCH MORE FORTHCOMING AND CONCRETE. THUS, IT SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT SOMETHING HAS BEGUN TO HAPPEN, AND THAT THE SENTENCE IN THE JOINT STATEMENT HAS SUBSTANCE.

4. ASSUMING BANGALEES HAVE COME OUT OF THEIR IMMOBILITY, TWO FACTORS COULD BE CAUSE. THE FIRST WOULD BE THE PARTICIPATION OF KAMAL HOSSAIN WHO RETURNED TO MFA ON MARCH 15 AFTER A TWO MONTH ABSENCE; WE DOUBT THAT

FOREIGN SECRETARY FAKHRUDDIN AHMED EVER HAD A BRIEF (MUCH LESS THE TASTE) FOR SOLID NEGOTIATIONS IN THE THREE MEETINGS WHICH OCCURRED WHILE KAMAL HOSSAIN WAS AWAY. THE SECOND COULD BE THE DECISION BY THE INDIANS, LONG DEFERRED, TO MAKE A SPECIFIC CLAIM (SEE STATE 65635); GIVEN THE EXTENT OF THE INDIAN CLAIM, WHICH WOULD SEEM TO MIRROR THAT OF THE BANGALEES IN ITS LIBERALITY, THE NEED FOR SERIOUS BARGAINING MAY HAVE REGISTERED ON THE BANGALEES.

5. CONTRARY TO DIXIT'S STATEMENT REPORTED PARA 3 REFTEL, IT WOULD, OF COURSE, BE POSSIBLE TO AGREE ON A BOUNDARY LINE THAT DID NOT GIVE AWAY EITHER CARLSBERG'S OR ASHLAND'S CONCESSION AREA.
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